

dication of the complete maturation of the whole organism, so far as regards the first assumption of the nuptial plumage by young birds. In respect to the older birds, the donning of the nuptial dress and activity of the sexual organs are coincident phenomena of the breeding season, but that the latter is not necessarily the cause of the former seems evident from the breeding of young male birds before acquiring the nuptial dress, as is well known to occur in many species, familiar examples of which being the Purple Finch, the Redstart, and the Orchard Oriole. The subject, however, is an important one, well worthy of the most careful investigation.—J. A. ALLEN, *American Museum of Natural History, 77th St. and 8th Ave., New York City.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

[Correspondents are requested to write briefly and to the point. No attention will be paid to anonymous communications.]

The Classification of the Macrochires.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

Sirs: Recent examinations of nine of the skeletons of the representatives of the three sub-orders of birds (Caprimulgi, Cypseli, and Trochili) now constituting, according to the Check-List of the American Ornithologists' Union, the order Macrochires, convince me, so far as skeletal characters go, that we are retaining in the same order birds that undoubtedly belong to very different orders. There is no question in the world but that the Swifts are widely separated from the Hummingbirds, and a comparison of the structural characters of any of the forms of these two groups will at once convince us that they are fully entitled to ordinal rank. The Cypseli are profoundly modified Passeres, coming nearer the Swallows in their organization than any other group of birds, and should be awarded a place in the system accordingly. On the other hand, the Trochili are fully entitled to an order by themselves, and further investigations are necessary to ascertain how they are approached, structurally, by other groups.

Again, this classification will leave the Caprimulgi standing out by themselves, as they undoubtedly should do, in an order of their own, as an examination of their organization goes to show that they have but little in common with the Cypseli, and are widely separated from the Hummingbirds.

My preliminary examination into the structure of this group has just been published (Dec. 1, 1885) in the 'Proceedings' of the Zoölogical Society of London, where much will be found which the limitations of space will prevent me from discussing here, but further investigations in the directions pointed out are of the highest interest and importance. It is

my intention, if nothing prevents, to further pursue the investigations I have already inaugurated, and thoroughly compare the remaining systems of these groups, more especially the muscular, arterial, and digestive systems. To this end it is very important that I should have my material as complete as American types can make it, and the principal object of this letter is to call the attention of the members of the A. O. U. to this matter, and to solicit their assistance in the work. As my desiderata are not extensive, and for the most part not difficult to obtain, I feel that I can look with certainty to the realization of my hopes in that direction.

I have already written to some of my friends in Arizona and California for alcoholic specimens of the various forms of Trochili, and all such donations of course will be fully acknowledged in my future contributions to the subject.

Alcoholic specimens of any of the Trogons are particularly desirable, and the following forms essentially so: *Autrostomus carolinensis*, two specimens; *Chatura pelagica*, six specimens; *Progne subis*, six specimens. And, as I have already said, any of the Hummingbirds.

The specimens should be properly tagged, giving donor, locality, date, etc., and placed in good alcohol in an ordinary screw-top glass fruit-jar, and packed round with sawdust in a box as small as is compatible with safe transportation, and sent C. O. D. to me by express. I would beg such persons as are willing to assist in this work, to communicate with me *before* sending material, in order to save expense (as express rates are very high), and the undue duplication of material.

Very respectfully yours,

R. W. SHUFELDT.

Fort Wingate, New Mexico, May 1, 1886.

NOTES AND NEWS.

THE second edition of Dr. Coues's 'Key' being already out of print, Messrs. Estes & Lauriat announce the third edition, which will contain the new nomenclature of the A. O. U. Committee, with all necessary corrections and additions to date. This edition will appear in two forms, one like the second edition, the other called the 'Sportsman's Edition' for use in the field, on thin paper, trimmed to a very narrow margin, and bound in flexible Russia leather covers.

THE Milwaukee Society of German Journalists and Booksellers have issued a prospectus of Mr. H. Nehrling's work on North American birds, entitled 'Die nordamerikanische Vogelwelt,' which is to be published by subscription in ten to twelve quarto parts, with colored plates, at \$1 per part. A work in the German language on North American birds is still a desideratum, and one which is doubtless much felt by the German Americans: and no one is doubtless better fitted than Mr. Nehrling to supply